



BORDER 2012: U.S.- MEXICO ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM

REGIONAL WORKGROUP NEWSLETTER

ARIZONA - SONORA

Summer/Fall 2003

Border 2012: U.S. – Mexico Environmental Program



*Rural road in Douglas,
Arizona/Agua Prieta, Sonora area*

EPA and SEMARNAT created the ten-year Border 2012 program in partnership with other federal agencies including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Mexican Secretariat of Health, the ten border-state governments, and U.S. tribal governments. Border 2012 emphasizes a bottom-up approach, anticipating that local decision-making, priority setting, and project implementation will best address environmental issues in the border region. Border 2012 has evolved from previous binational programs: the Integrated Border Environmental Plan and Border XXI.

Regional Workgroups are the foundation of Border 2012. These are multi-media and geographically focused, and emphasize regional public

health and environmental issues. They coordinate activities at the regional level and support the efforts of local Task Forces. Each Regional Workgroup has one state and one federal co-chair from each country. Four binational workgroups have been established in the following regions: California-Baja California, Arizona-Sonora, New Mexico-Texas-Chihuahua, and Texas-Coahuila-Nuevo León-Tamaulipas.

This publication will focus on the Arizona-Sonora Regional Workgroup and the Task Forces created on June 5, 2003, at the 1st Regional Workgroup meeting held in Tucson, Arizona. To learn more about the Border 2012 Program, become involved in the program, view additional documents and related reports, visit the website at <http://www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder> or <http://www.adeq.state.az.us/> or <http://www.semarnat.gob.mx/frontera2012>. ■

MISSION STATEMENT:

"To protect the environment and public health in the U.S.-Mexico border region, consistent with the principles of sustainable development."

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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
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Arizona-Sonora Regional Workgroup Holds First Meeting

THE FIRST meeting of the Arizona-Sonora Regional Workgroup was held in Tucson, Arizona, on June 5, 2003. The meeting was held in conjunction with the plenary session of the Arizona-Mexico Commission and its sister organization, the Comisión Sonora-Arizona, at the Loews Ventana Canyon Resort. The Commissions, which have been in existence for over 40 years, are subsets of the governor's office for each respective state and consist of binational committees that formulate programs and action items relating to issues that strengthen the Arizona-Mexico relationship. This historical state-to-state collaboration contributed to the success of the Regional Workgroup meeting.

All agencies co-chairing the Arizona-Sonora Regional Workgroup were represented at the meeting. The U.S. co-chairs, Stephen A. Owens, Director of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, and Laura Yoshii, Deputy Regional Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Region 9, initiated the meeting. Welcoming comments were also made by José Luis Luna, Federal Delegate for Sonora for Mexico's Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources, and Angel

López Guzmán, representing the Secretariat of Urban Infrastructure and Ecology for the state of Sonora. A series of presentations followed.

The opening presentations described the U.S.-Mexico Border 2012 Environmental Program in general, its structure, the outcome of public comment meetings held in the region, and the proposed process for funding projects. This session was then followed by a presentation that highlighted specific projects and ongoing activities in the region. The approximately 200 audience members in attendance were given the opportunity to ask questions before going on to the next series of presentations. Representatives from the Southwest Center for Environmental Research and Policy, the Border Environment Cooperation Commission and the North American Development Bank closed this portion of the meeting by informing the audience of the efforts and progress their institutions have made in the Arizona-Sonora border region.

A session on local environmental priorities followed, which began with a video prepared by the Tohono O'odham Nation that underscored their environmental issues. These include uncontrolled



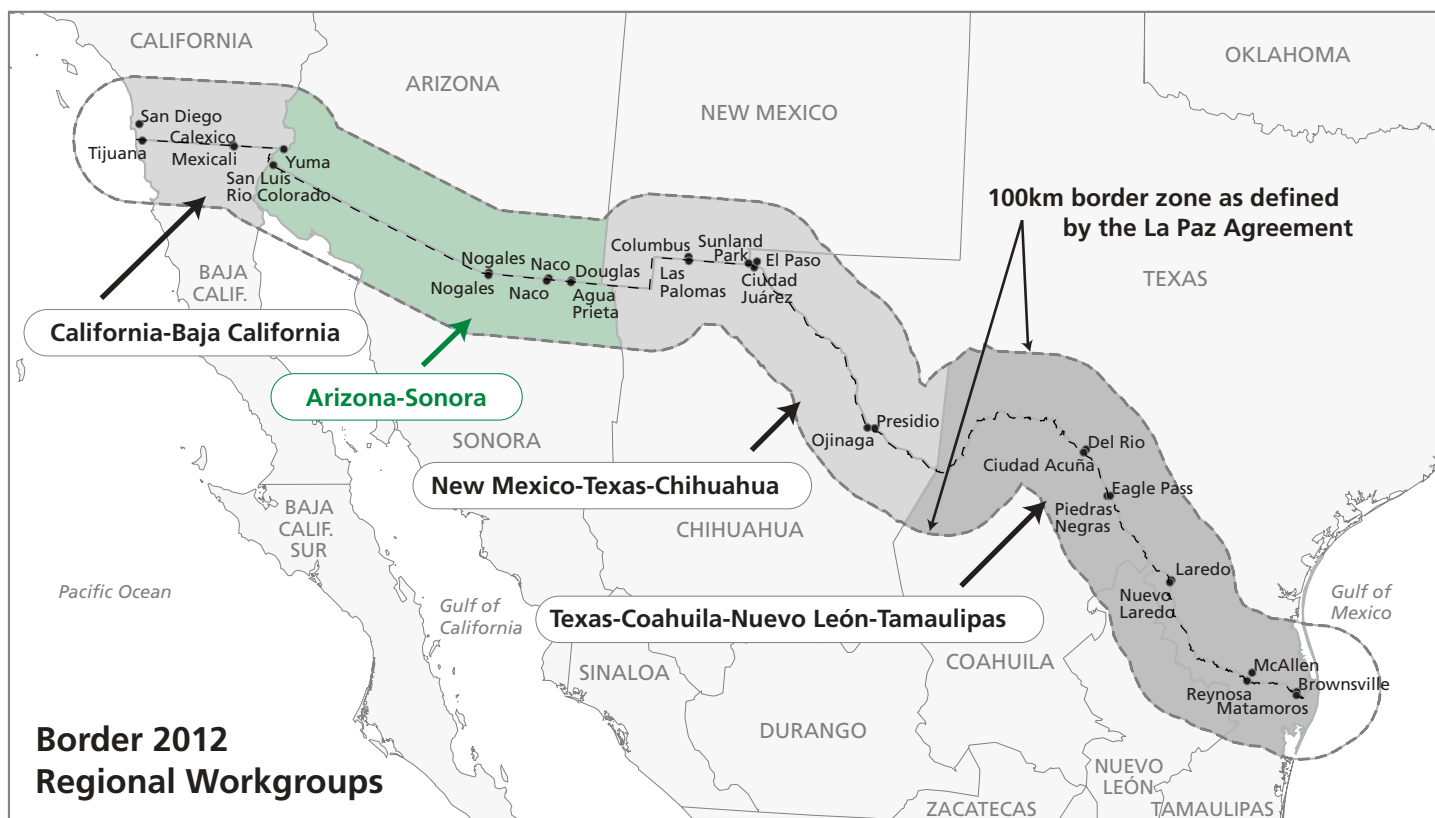
Representatives at the Arizona-Sonora Regional Workgroup Meeting held in Tucson, AZ.

solid waste disposal and the destruction of natural resources on tribal lands due to illegal immigration and drug trafficking. An important issue that a member of the Cocopah Tribe stressed is the limitations on services and educational outreach that tribal members experience due to the division of tribal lands and peoples by the U.S.-Mexico border. Tribal members that reside on the Mexican side of the border are restricted from receiving services in the U.S. even though they have cultural and familial links. Other issues raised by border community residents were the need for additional funding for monitoring projects and the lack of consistent prioritization due to administration changes in border communities. The wastewater infrastructure

project in Ambos Nogales was cited to illustrate this latter point, specifically that improvements to the systems have not been made since negotiations began several years ago.

Under the Border 2012 Program, regional workgroups appoint task forces to address specific environmental priorities. Examples of how these task forces might function were given in the form of presentations or briefings from members of groups that developed under the previous U.S.-Mexico border environmental program, Border XXI. Binational groups highlighted during this portion of the meeting were those dealing with the improvement of air quality in Ambos Nogales, hazardous/solid waste and enforcement issues,





and chemical emergency preparedness and response in the Arizona-Sonora border region.

Prior to closing the meeting, Director Owens informed the audience of the co-chairs' joint decision to authorize the appointment of five task forces for the Arizona-Sonora Regional Workgroup. Formal task force assignments were made for:

- Ambos Nogales Air Quality Improvement
- Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Waste and Enforcement
- Water
- Children's Environmental Health

Although not formalized during this initial meeting, the co-chairs agreed to explore the creation of an Environmental Education Task Force in the near future.

The next meeting of the Arizona-Sonora Regional Workgroup will be announced once a date and location have been determined, with details posted on agency Web sites. For questions or additional information on this workgroup, please contact Placido dos Santos of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality at (520) 628-6744 or dossantos.placido@ev.state.az.us, or Lorena López-Powers of U.S.

EPA's San Diego Border Liaison Office at (619) 235-4768 or lopez-powers.Lorena@epa.gov. Toll free numbers are also available: Mr. dos Santos may be reached at (888) 271-9302 and Ms. López-Powers at (800) 334-0741. ■



Port of entry crossing in Douglas, Arizona.



Brick kilns in San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora.

Arizona-Sonora Regional Task Forces Update

UNDER BORDER 2012, regional workgroups have the ability to create task forces to address specific regionally- and community-identified concerns, to implement site-specific projects, or to address issue-specific concerns. At the end of the first Arizona-Sonora Regional Meeting on June 5 (see the meeting summary on page 2), the co-chairs identified the first five task forces for this region. These are:

1. Ambos Nogales Air Quality Improvement
2. Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Response
3. Waste and Enforcement
4. Water
5. Children's Environmental Health

The task forces will be as representational as possible, including interested local communities; relevant local, state, federal and tribal governments; binational organizations; non-governmental and community-

based organizations; academic institutions; and the private sector as appropriate. However, regional enforcement task forces may not be as representative or open in their meetings due to the confidential nature of discussions of enforcement investigations.

Task forces will meet periodically, and information about their sessions will be made available to the public through the appropriate Web sites (please see listing in this publication) and flyers. In addition, all task forces will be responsible for creating implementation reports, the first of which will be released in early 2004. Task Force Workshops will be convened to ensure consistent implementation of the Border 2012 program.

For more information on the task forces of this region, please see articles on each in this publication. For general information, you may contact Lorena López-Powers at 619-235-4768, or lopez-powers.lorena@epa.gov or Edna Mendoza at (520) 628-6710 or mendoza.edna@ev.state.az.us. ■



Ambos Nogales Air Quality Task Force

The overall goal of the Ambos Nogales Air Quality Task Force is to take actions to improve air quality, and thus public health, in Ambos Nogales. This task force will build upon efforts of the Border Liaison Mechanism Economic and Social Development Subgroup, which was initiated in 2001 by the U.S. and Mexico Consuls of Ambos Nogales. The first meeting held by this binational group was in March of that same year and has been guided by several interim objectives or phases: introduction, informational sessions and immediate actions, decision-making, and feasibility evaluation/implementation. The task force is currently starting the last of these phases.

Several next steps have been identified within short-, medium-

and long-term time frames. These are highlighted in a report currently under development, which includes a complete compilation of data and information pertinent to the process. Once completed, the *Plan of Action to Improve Air Quality in Ambos Nogales* report will be made available to interested stakeholders and posted on the Web sites of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality and U.S. EPA.

The Border Liaison Mechanism Subgroup / Ambos Nogales Air Quality Task Force will have its first meeting as a formal Border 2012 task force on September 24, 2003. The focus will be on identifying lead individuals to spearhead the implementation of the air quality improvement recommendations, transitioning from the outgoing to the incoming state and municipal administrations in Mexico, and beginning to develop action plans for carrying out the recommendations. For more information or to have your name added to the mailing list to receive the report currently under production, please contact Michèle Kimpel Guzmán of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, at (520) 628-6717 or (888) 271-9302 (toll free in the U.S.) or kimpelguzman.michele@ev.state.az.us.



Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Response Task Force

More than 45 government officials from the U.S. and Mexico met in Rio Rico, Arizona, on June 4 to discuss the formation of an Arizona/Sonora Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Response Task Force. The task force will play a key role in meeting Goal 5 of Border 2012 – reducing exposure to chemicals as a result of accidental chemical releases and/or acts of terrorism – and provide technical input to the Arizona/Sonora Regional Workgroup.

Over the last three years, all four Arizona/Sonora sister city pairs have signed binational emergency response plans and established emergency planning committees. A state-to-state-level task force has long been thought necessary to resolve borderwide issues and risks that go beyond the sister city

limits. Participants at this meeting to create the task force included U.S. EPA; Civil Protection; PROFEPA; FBI; SEMARNAT; the cities of Nogales, San Luis, Rio Rico and Tubac, Arizona; the city of Nogales, Sonora; and Cochise and Santa Cruz counties in Arizona.

The attendees outlined preliminary goals and objectives for the task force. Among these goals are indemnification for cross-border responders, inclusion of tribal and other lands not covered in existing plans, and improvement in communications, emergency medical and public health, training, and cross-border notifications. The director of the State of Sonora Civil Protection and representatives of U.S. EPA and an as-yet-to-be-determined Arizona city or county will provide leadership and coordination of the task force. The Cochise County Health Department was applauded for offering to provide administrative support and coordination to the group.

The Task Force held its 2nd meeting at the Association of Custom's Brokers Offices in Nogales, Sonora on July 16th and over 70 government reps participated. Dr. Diane Carper, Director of the Cochise County Health

Department was selected as the Chair of the U.S. delegation and; Lic Carlos Kitazawa, Director of Protección Civil Estatal Co-chair of the Mexico delegation. Lauren Volpini, U.S. EPA Liaison will continue to provide guidance, support and coordination. It was decided that the Press may take pictures and conduct interviews prior to the convening of the Task Force at each scheduled meeting. While the Task Force will be conducted among governmental agencies only, the public and private sector will be welcomed to participate on the final agenda item of every meeting. The Task Force will publish and distribute material and hold public informational sessions. From time to time, there will be Task Force agenda items that will allow for public participation and specific topics where the Task Force will invite community leaders, experts and industry representatives to be involved (i.e. railroad safety).

For more information on the task force or the sister city plans, please contact Lauren Volpini, EPA Region 9's U.S.-Mexico Program Manager for Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Response, at (415) 972-3076.



Waste and Enforcement Task Force

The Arizona/Sonora Waste and Enforcement Task Force operated for several years as the Arizona/Sonora La Paz Hazardous and Solid Waste and Enforcement Subworkgroup under the previous U.S.-Mexico border environmental program. This subgroup has met

quarterly, as a combined regional subgroup for enforcement and hazardous and solid waste, since the fall of 1996. The meetings alternate between the U.S. and Mexico and are held at locations on or near the border, such as in Yuma-San Luis Río Colorado, Douglas-Agua Prieta, and Ambos Nogales.

Meeting agendas are prepared in advance by the co-chairs, which have included state and federal U.S. representatives from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and a federal Mexico representative from the Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente (PROFEPA). All meetings receive simultaneous interpretation in English and Spanish.

Participation has included virtually all agencies – federal, state, tribal and local – with enforcement authority over environmental matters in the border area. In addition to other agenda items such as technical outreach and binational pollution prevention activities, discussions of prospective and ongoing enforcement actions are incorporated. As a result, public participation has been limited to presentations and dialogue during a portion of some meetings.

The group met on August 14 in Bisbee, Arizona. Although for the moment only government law enforcement agencies and their representatives could participate, a key discussion point was how to incorporate public participation without jeopardizing the confidentiality that is needed in the enforcement arena. For additional information on this task force, please contact John Rothman of the Office of Regional Counsel at EPA Region 9 at (415) 972-3923 or rothman.john@epa.gov or Plácido dos Santos of ADEQ at (520) 628-6744 or (888) 271-9302 (toll free in the U.S.) or dossantos.placido@ev.state.az.us.



Creating a Children's Environmental Health Task Force

One of the most important things we can do to protect our children's future is make sure they grow up in a healthy natural environment. Because children are especially vulnerable to the unhealthy effects of pollution, Governor Janet Napolitano has directed the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality to begin the Children's Environmental Health Project to integrate children's health concerns into the state's environmental protection efforts.

In response to this directive, ADEQ is implementing a four-step "C.A.R.E. Strategy" to address environmental health risks to Arizona children. Through the following objectives, ADEQ and its many partners are charting a course toward a cleaner, safer, healthier environment for our children:

- Coordinate the many interests involved with children's environmental health issues
- Assess and prioritize the environmental health factors affecting Arizona children
- Reduce the number and types of contaminants adversely affecting Arizona's children
- Educate citizens about environmental hazards and how to reduce children's exposure

Recognizing the significant children's environmental health issues along the U.S.-Mexico Border, the Arizona/Sonora Regional Workgroup has agreed to further support and focus ongoing efforts by establishing a Children's Environmental Health Task Force.

The primary goal of the task force will be to identify, track and prevent priority children's environmental health issues including respiratory illness (e.g., asthma), gastrointestinal illness and pesticide exposure. Alice Wallwork, ADEQ Children's Environmental Health Coordinator, has been designated as the U.S. co-chair of the task force. For more information, contact Alice Wallwork at (602) 771-2231 or wallwork.alice@ev.state.az.us .



Water Task Force

At the Arizona/Sonora Regional Work Group meeting, Jim Holway of the Arizona Department of Water Resources proposed the formation of an Arizona/Sonora Water Task Force. The co-chairs agreed that this task force was needed, and supported the suggestion. ADWR and EPA have been discussing how best to implement the task force, and whether there should be one or two task forces, one with a center of interest in Yuma (Lower Colorado) and the other in Nogales, including all other binationally shared waters.

Look for an announcement of an initial meeting of the task force in the near future. For more information, you may contact Eugenia McNaughton at 415-972-3411 or at mcnaughton.eugenia@epa.gov. ■

Tribal Border Update

THE Tohono O'odham, Cocopah and Quechan Tribes attended the Arizona-Sonora Regional Workgroup Meeting convened on June 5, 2003, in Tucson. The workgroup session was overall well attended by tribal representatives. Subsequent tribal recommendations were made and include the formation of the following task forces: one to address solid waste pollution from migration and drug trafficking, and one for outreach to the Mexican tribes for participa-

tion in the Border 2012 Program.

The Tribal Caucus held its first meeting on August 12, 2003, in San Diego. It was an opportunity for U.S. and Mexican tribes to discuss the tribes' roles and environmental tribal border issues in respect to the Border 2012 program. Please feel free to contact Jim Fletcher at the U.S. EPA San Diego Border Office at (619) 235-4765 or fletcher.james@epa.gov for more information. ■

EPA to Launch Competitive Funding Process

To help achieve the goals and objectives of Border 2012, the U.S. EPA will initiate a program to competitively fund projects. Regional workgroup co-chairs will evaluate and rank projects based upon criteria that consider how well projects address Border 2012 objectives and whether the project will provide measurable results.

U.S. states, tribes, multi-state/tribal organizations, universities, local governments, industry associations, and NGOs may submit proposals for projects addressing Border 2012 goals and objectives conducted in the 100 km border region defined in the 1983 La Paz

Agreement. Organizations may submit multiple proposals.

The goal of the competitive process is to target funding to implement projects meeting the following program objectives: improve budget planning, share decision-making, increase opportunities to leverage projects with funding from a wide array of sources, increase environmental education, make information on projects available, and comply with EPA's grant competition requirements. EPA anticipates making public notice of a request for proposals in late fall 2003. ■

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Websites

www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder

www.semarnat.gob.mx/sonora

www.adeq.state.az.us

www.siuie.gob.mx